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To: 'microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I will be brief, as I assume you receive thousands of letters on this subject per day.

Microsoft has, at various times:

- eliminated OS competition (DR-DOS, BeOS)
- eliminated Software competition (Netscape)

It has done this not by creating a better product for a fair price, which would be applauded by myself and many others. It has done this by using its' position as a very large, very powerful monopoly to create licensing impediments, create artificial technical incompatibilities, and give away free products until competition was eliminated.

Licensing impediments: BeOS, an extremely viable desktop OS for the x86 platform, could not be pre-installed on x86 computers by vendors on their OEM products. Why? Microsoft's OS licensing agreements with these companies forbade it. With Windows as the dominant platform, OEMs could not afford to ship x86 computers without Windows.

Licensing impediments: Netscape, a pioneer in the browser market, could not be pre-installed on x86 computers by vendors on their OEM products. Why? Microsoft's OS licensing agreements with these companies forbade it. With Windows as the dominant platform, OEMs could not afford to ship x86 computers without Windows.

Artificial technical incompatibilities: DR-DOS was a direct competitor to MS-DOS before Windows 3.1 hit the market. Windows 3.1 was not an operating system; it was a piece of separate software called a 'window manager' that runs on top of an operating system. Windows 3.1 was fully compatible with both DR-DOS and MS-DOS. In order to prevent people from using Windows with DR-DOS, they programmed a module in Windows to detect DR-DOS. If DR-DOS was detected, it threw error messages -- not "Windows is not compatible with DR-DOS" error messages, but random cryptic messages that could not be traced or fixed. Microsoft tech support staff told customers that DR-DOS was not truly MS-DOS compatible (it was) and that DR-DOS was causing the error messages.

Giving away free products: This is well-documented with Netscape, and I will not rehash it here.

In a nutshell, then, Microsoft has a proven history of eliminating competition by manipulating their operating system and software holdings. Without splitting the company in two, this pattern will continue.

Consider: Internet Explorer WAS a piece of software; now Microsoft claims it is part of the operating system. Windows Explorer WAS a piece of software (windows 3.1); now Microsoft claims it is part of the operating system. It is likely a matter of time before software like MSN, Office, MSN Messenger and others are 'part of the operating system', and software such as AOL, WordPerfect, AOL Instant Messenger and others are 'incompatible programs' that cannot be shipped with OEM products or installed and run on Windows' computers.

Did I say I would be brief? Sorry about that -- it's a very complicated subject after all.